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In the brief notice of Professor von Boguslawsky, in the last Annual Report, a serious oversight was committed by the translator. It is said that the magnetical instruments of the Breslau Observatory were furnished by the British Government, at the recommendation of Humboldt and of the British Association. This is not correct. The instruments were presented by the British Assoation, *without any assistance from the Government*, and on their own knowledge. Neither did the series of observations begin so early as is stated, for the instruments were not sent till 1839. We are obliged to Colonel Sabine for these corrections.

Ready for the Press,

Cometic Orbits, with copious Notes. By Edward J. Cooper, Esq.

The object of the compiler of this work was to produce a catalogue of those comets whose orbits have been computed, together with such notes on their physical appearances, as should save astronomers the trouble of reference to a great many volumes of works written in different languages, and, in fact, prove a useful manual.

The catalogue will contain 198 distinct comets and 786 orbits. The volume will be printed and bound uniformly with the *Markree Catalogue of Stars near the Ecliptic*, and its price will be 5*s*.

The Royal Society takes sixty copies.

The attention of astronomers is particularly called to the following work, *The History of Physical Astronomy from the Earliest Ages to the Middle of the Nineteenth Century*, by Robert Grant, F.R.A.S., in 1 vol. 8vo. pp. 638.

Mr. Bishop presented a copy of the tenth hour of his ecliptic charts which has recently been engraved. It is exceedingly clear and distinct, and perfectly adapted to its object, namely, to facilitate the search for new planets.

Mr. Nasmyth suggests that all telescopic observations should be invariably accompanied with a notice of the focal length, aperture, and magnifying power of the telescope employed. If a uniform system were adopted, very little space would be lost even by a frequent repetition. The focal length and aperture might be in inches and decimals of an inch, thus: 42, 3·75; 80, would describe a $3\frac{1}{2}$-foot telescope, aperture $3\frac{3}{4}$ inches, and power 80.

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On Luminous Meteor-like Bodies, telescopically visible in Sunshine.
By the Rev. W. R. Dawes.

The luminous bodies, which have been occasionally observed with a telescope in full sunshine, are so far astronomically interesting in consequence of their resemblance to meteors, as to render it desirable to ascertain their real nature; and with the hope of throwing light upon the subject, I beg to lay before the Astronomical Society a somewhat detailed account of some observations I made upon such bodies last autumn, under peculiarly favourable circumstances. Thinking that Mr. Read, who communicated his observations on some similar appearances in the autumn of 1850, might have had opportunities of repeating his examination of them in the course of last year, I postponed the communication of my observations, hoping that further light might have been thrown upon the subject by himself. As, however, he has, in the *Monthly Notice* for December last, only given a more full account of his observations of the previous year, I presume he has found no opportunity of repeating them.

On two or three occasions, during my residence at Cranbrook, I noticed similar appearances while observing in daylight, though never in such extraordinary numbers as Mr. Read saw them, nor as they were observed by myself last autumn. On previous occasions I had soon satisfied myself as to their real nature; yet, on the appearance of Mr. Read's account, I determined to take the first favourable opportunity of more carefully examining them, and noting down the particulars of the phenomenon. Such an opportunity occurred on the 9th of September, 1851.

The day was cloudless, the sun hot, the wind from about E.N.E., and dry. A little before noon, I was preparing to observe the sun with my 8½-foot refractor; and while looking at it through the finder with a glass sufficiently dark to render the sun's light easy to the eye, I was surprised to see a bright object pass across pretty rapidly, nearly from east to west. In a few seconds another passed nearly in the same direction. Four or five more passed in quick succession, when Mr. Read's observation was brought to my recollection, and I determined to institute a careful examination of the phenomenon.

The brightness of the objects seemed very surprising, when it was considered that the sun was actually in the field of the finder, with a sufficiently dark glass applied, and yet they attracted my attention as they passed rapidly across.

Having applied a positive comet-eye-piece with a large flat field, and magnifying 65 times, I directed the telescope as near to the sun as my eye would bear without the defence of a dark glass, having previously adjusted the focus on the edge of the sun by the help of a dark glass, which was then removed. Immediately plenty of these luminous objects were seen, all passing nearly in the same direction, namely, from about E.N.E. to W.S.W.; but a few proceeded from N.E. or N.N.E. Some of them were much larger

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than others; the largest being usually the roundest, and moving across the field in less time than the smaller ones, though, from their size and brilliance, it was easier to keep the eye upon them.

No obvious *phase* was visible in them, though they were not always of equal brightness in every part. Their brilliance greatly increased as the direction of the telescope approached the place of the sun; and though a dark glass of pretty deep tint then became needful to defend the eye, the objects were bright in the field, and they were the brightest when the sun itself was admitted a little way into the field, the dark glass being of sufficiently deep shade to permit the sun to be comfortably viewed through it. As a comparative standard of their brilliancy at a greater distance from the sun, I moved the telescope upon the planet *Venus*, which was then about 6° to the west of the sun. Plenty of the luminous objects passed through the field, and many of them were *much* brighter than the planet. On applying the dark glass with which I had seen them so well near the sun, *Venus* was totally hidden, as she was also with a far lighter shade of glass. The extraordinary increase of brilliancy which they acquire from being viewed nearly in the direction of the sun is thus made strikingly apparent. As the phenomenon was so well exhibited, I called out a member of my family to view it, who remarked that the objects looked very much like meteors. Some of them appeared larger than the planet *Jupiter* would do with the same power.

Having on former occasions ascertained that similar appearances were caused by *feathered seeds,* and especially those of thistles, floating with the breeze, and seen out of focus, I unclamped the circles of the equatoreal and moving the telescope freely with one hand, while the other was applied to the sliding adjusting-tube of the eye-piece, I was enabled to follow many of the most conspicuous of them, and to bring them correctly into focus. Their real nature thus became apparent. The largest were seen to roll over and over, and in some the feathery down was distinctly visible. The focal adjustment on the different objects varied greatly, showing that they were at very different distances; and in almost every instance the smallest were the most distant.

Between four and five o'clock in the afternoon, I varied my observation of them by bringing the sun into the south-west portion of the field, with a focal adjustment on the telescope considerably longer than was suitable for the sun. Many were still floating across, though I thought them less numerous than in the middle of the day. Several entered the north-east side of the field, and appeared extraordinarily bright till they passed on to the sun's disk, on which they immediately became dark spots, much like the third and fourth satellites of *Jupiter* when transiting his disk; but those which happened to be pretty correctly in focus were beautifully defined on the sun, and the feathered down of some of them more distinctly seen than in any other situation. From the differences observable among them, however, I think it probable that the seeds of several very different plants were floating together in the air,

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besides those of various species of thistle (*Cnicus lanceolatus* and *Cnicus arvensis*), such as the seeds of dandelion, groundsel, and some kinds of willow (*Salix triandra* especially). It should be remarked that the weather had been for some time previously very dry and calm, and that on the day of observation a brisk air was stirring.

By screening my eyes from the direct rays of the sun, and looking steadily as near to the sun as the glare would permit, I could occasionally discern one or two sparkling points moving in the air; but in general they were much too high to be discerned without telescopic aid.

Though it is of course impossible to decide that these objects were of the same character as those observed by Mr. Read, yet the similarity of the phenomena seems to render it almost certain that they were so. In Mr. Read's communication the direction of the wind is not mentioned. That none of them should have been seen in the night renders their meteoric character highly improbable: had such a dense shoal of bodies so brilliant as those described either by Mr. Read, or in this paper, passed in the night, they would have sufficed to turn darkness into day. It is worthy of remark that Mr. Read's observations were made at almost precisely the same time of the year as my own; and I believe such an appearance will be seen only in the summer or autumn.

Letter from Lieut. R. Wilcox, R.N., Worthing, on a remarkable Appearance at Sunset.

"On the evening of April 8th, about 5 minutes after sunset, a red column arose from the place of the sun, and gradually ascended until it had attained a height of about 25° above the horizon; it there remained for 23 minutes and suddenly disappeared. The column had not a ray-like appearance as in the northern lights, but was of equal breadth from the base to the summit, and had the appearance of a bright red flame. I do not know if this appearance is very uncommon, but I have never happened to observe it before during a long service at sea."

Extract of a Letter from Mr. Spencer Hall to Capt. W. H. Smyth, R.N.

"As you think a few lines on the column of light seen at sunset on the 6th and 8th of April, may be of use in comparing statements, I am induced to trouble you upon the matter. I should state I was at Brighton for the recovery of my health, and that it was my constant habit to walk on the West Parade from 5·30 to 6·30 or 7 every evening. I was also in the habit of watching the sunset, for the purpose of comparing the real with the pictorial effects given by great artists, merely as a means of self-instruction.